



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE Joint Fiscal Office

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Fiscal Note

May 5, 2025

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S.109 – An act relating to miscellaneous judiciary procedures

As recommended by the House Committee on Judiciary, Draft 8.1¹

Bill Summary

This bill contains numerous technical corrections and miscellaneous provisions related to the Judiciary. As recommended by the House Committee on Judiciary, the bill would create four task forces or working groups, though only one would be entitled to per diem compensation and expense reimbursement. The bill would also repeal the sunset on marriage license fees, which would maintain the existing \$80 fee beyond June 30, 2025. The bill would also stipulate additional criteria for the Court Administrator when evaluating capital funding requests for county courthouses.

Fiscal Impact

The Firearm Surrender Order Compliance Working Group created in Section 24 would cost the Office of the Attorney General approximately \$1,500 for per diem compensation and expense reimbursement. The bill contains no appropriation for this cost.

The repeal of the sunset on marriage license fees in sections 27-28 would maintain the current \$80 fee beyond June 30, 2025. This would maintain approximately \$72,000 of annual revenue to the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund and \$24,000 of annual revenue to town clerks statewide.

Background and Details

The following sections of the bill have a fiscal impact or pertain to fiscal matters:

Section 24: Firearm Surrender Order Compliance Working Group

This section would require the Office of the Attorney General to convene a Firearm Surrender Order Compliance Working Group to develop a uniform process to ensure compliance with court orders to surrender firearms. The Working Group would be charged with examining the statutory or policy changes necessary to create a uniform process to monitor compliance, support entities charged with storing and returning surrendered firearms pursuant to court orders, and identify a stable and reliable funding source for any additional resources needed to monitor compliance. The Working Group would be comprised of eight members:

1. the Attorney General or designee, who shall be the chair;
2. the Chief Superior Court Judge or designee;
3. the Defender General or designee;

¹ The Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) is a nonpartisan legislative office dedicated to producing unbiased fiscal analysis – this fiscal note is meant to provide information for legislative consideration, not to provide policy recommendations.

4. one State's Attorney or designee, appointed by the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs;
5. a member appointed by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence;
6. a member of the Vermont State Police, appointed by the Commissioner of Public Safety;
7. a police chief, appointed by the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police; and
8. a federal firearms licensee, appointed by the Attorney General.

The Working Group would be required to consult with specific stakeholders and report its recommendations on or before November 15, 2025 to the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary and to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee.

The Working Group would be authorized to meet not more than six times. Members who are not State employees or who are not otherwise compensated or reimbursed for their attendance would be entitled to per diem compensation and expense reimbursement pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010. Assuming that two members of the Working Group qualify for compensation (the member appointed by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and the federal firearms licensee appointed by the Attorney General), this would result in a cost of approximately \$1,500 to the Office of Attorney General. Actual costs will vary based on meeting attendance, mileage reimbursement claimed, etc.

Sections 27-28: Repeal of Sunset on Marriage License Fees

Sections 27 and 28 would repeal the sunset relating to a 2023 increase in marriage license fees. Act 19 (2023) increased the fee for a marriage license from \$60 to \$80 for a two-year period. Of the \$20 increase, the amount directed to the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund increased by \$15 (from \$35 to \$50) and the sum retained by town clerks was increased by \$5 (from \$10 to \$15). The remaining \$15 from the marriage license fee is remitted to the General Fund – an amount unchanged by Act 19.

These sections would maintain the current \$80 fee. Absent this change, the marriage license fee will revert to its prior \$60 level effective July 1, 2025. This would result in an annual loss of revenue to the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund of approximately \$72,000 and to town clerks statewide of \$24,000, beginning in fiscal year 2026.

Sections 33-34: County Courthouse Capital Budget Requests

These sections pertain to capital funding requests for county courthouses but have no direct fiscal impact. Effective July 1, 2026, Section 33 would require the Court Administrator to evaluate capital budget requests for courthouses from counties based on several additional criteria:

- whether the funding request is consistent with a capital program developed pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 133(e)(3);
- whether the project that is the subject of the request has been included in the list of capital projects in the county's budget pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 133(e)(1), and, if so, the description of the project included in the budget; and
- whether the county has established a capital reserve fund pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 133(e)(3), and, if so, the amount of annual contributions the county has made to the fund.

Section 34 would require the Court Administrator and a representative of the Association of County Judges appointed by the President of that Association to jointly report to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate Committee on Institutions on the progress made to implement the provisions of Section 33. The report would be required to be submitted on or before January 15, 2026 and include a description of the steps taken and processes considered, as well as any proposed legislative changes necessary to ensure that capital budget requests for county courthouses include information required by Section 33.

ⁱ The full fiscal note history is available on the fiscal tab of the bill page on the General Assembly website and can be pulled up through a bill number search on the JFO page.